

## Emergencies in High Rise Buildings

Recent fires in high rise buildings have renewed interest in fire safety on the part of the public.

Because high rise buildings are generally built to be “fire resistive” (no building is “fire proof”) and include reliable enclosed stairways, fires are usually confined to individual offices, apartments, or possibly the contents of one floor level.

Citizens should realize that a fire in a high rise is no cause for panic. You should realize, however, that if a fire occurs within your office, apartment, floor, or close to your floor, it will be necessary for you to seek safety as soon as possible. That’s why it is vitally important that you- as an occupant- be well acquainted with your buildings stairways and the proper procedures to follow in case of fire.



### KNOW YOUR BUILDING

- + You should be familiar with the location of all exit stairways on your floor.
- + Have an escape plan. You and your family or co-workers should discuss in advance what you will do if the closest exit cannot be used.
- + Because no two fires are alike, plan carefully and learn your building layout well so you can change your exit plan as conditions warrant.
- + It's a good idea to count the number of steps necessary to reach all the exit stairways on your floor. It's possible that the exit signs and hallway lighting will be out of service.
- + Pre-determine a location outside the building for members of your family or co-workers to meet after leaving the building.

You may become separated while exiting the building, especially if large numbers of people are leaving at the same time!

- ✚ Early notification of other occupants in the building may save many lives in the event of a major fire or other emergency.

## **IF YOU DISCOVER SMOKE OR FIRE IN YOUR BUILDING**

1. **IMMEDIATELY CALL 911 OR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.** Tell the operator the street address and the floor, apartment or office number. Also give the name of the building. Do not assume that anyone else has already reported the emergency.
2. **BEFORE TRYING TO LEAVE YOUR OFFICE OR APARTMENT, FEEL THE DOOR WITH THE BACK OF YOUR HAND.** If the door feels warm to the touch within five seconds, do not attempt to open it, as this indicates the presence of dangerous fire conditions on the other side.
3. **IF THE DOOR DOES NOT FEEL WARM TO THE TOUCH, CAREFULLY OPEN IT A SMALL AMOUNT.** This allows you to check for the presence of smoke in the corridor. Place your weight against the door as you open it. This allows you to quickly close the door if necessary.
4. **IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU CAN SAFELY ENTER THE CORRIDOR....** Alert the occupants of your floor by pulling the nearest fire alarm box. Then immediately proceed to the closest exit stairway. Be sure to close the door to your office or apartment and the stairway door behind you. Do not attempt to use any elevator!
5. **IF YOUR DOOR FEELS WARM OR IF THERE IS HEAVY SMOKE IN THE CORRIDOR, KEEP THE DOOR CLOSED!** Seal cracks around the door and other places where smoke appears to be entering with wet towels, blankets, or similar materials. Turn off central air conditioning / heating units, as they obtain fresh air from outside your space and can bring smoke in or feed the fire.
6. **IF YOU CANNOT LEAVE YOUR OFFICE OR APARTMENT, STAY CALM.** Call 911 and give them your exact location, including which floor you are on and the room number. Keep calm until rescue personnel direct you to safety. Do not lock your door!
7. **IF SMOKE ENTERS YOUR OFFICE OR APARTMENT** and your windows can be opened, open one window slightly as close to the ceiling as possible. In buildings without operating windows, stay close to the floor and use the cooler, fresher air available at that level.

8. **IF YOUR OFFICE OR APARTMENT HAS A BALCONY** you may be able to leave your room and reach safety by means of an outside stairway. Be sure to close the door or window behind you if you leave, but DO NOT LOCK THE DOOR!

### **ACTIONS TO AVOID**

***DON'T USE THE BUILDING ELEVATOR UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!***

***DON'T ASSUME THAT SOMEONE ELSE HAS ALREADY CALLED 911!***

***DON'T ATTEMPT TO REMOVE YOUR CAR FROM ITS PARKING SPACE!***

This would cause traffic congestion and hamper the efforts of emergency units to reach the building.

***DON'T JUST SHOUT "FIRE!"*** Use the fire alarm system to notify other occupants of the building.

***DON'T RE-ENTER THE BUILDING UNTIL PERMITTED TO DO SO BY THE EMERGENCY RESPONDERS.***

In the event you have a fire in your high rise building, following these guidelines will help you and your family or co-workers survive the incident.

If you are in a wheelchair, or are otherwise mobility challenged, go to the nearest stairway and emergency response personnel will assist you when they arrive on the scene. Some elevators may be approved as emergency exits, but be sure to check with your property manager to confirm this information.



### **IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER**

**Call 911 immediately!** A few seconds may make the difference between a minor loss and a major fire.

**Know the location of all exit stairways.** They are usually located at the end of the corridors or adjacent to the elevators and are marked with a standard exit sign.

**Know how to reach two separate exits.** Do not plan on using only one escape route. This means of egress may be blocked by fire or heavy smoke. Have a backup plan.

**Know the location of the nearest fire alarm box.** They are usually located in the corridors or near exits or adjacent to elevators. Know the locations well enough that you can find them in the dark. These alarm systems notify building occupants and do not always notify the Fire Department automatically.

For additional information contact the College Station Fire Department at 979-764-3705.

